

# 6 ACT\* Conversations

\*Acceptance & Commitment Training

## Session 4: Mindfulness and Being Present

### Exercise 5: Just Sitting – Instructions

The fifth exercise is sitting, or as I usually call it “Just Sitting”. The reason I call it Just Sitting is to make it clear that when you do this exercise, sitting is all you do. Not sitting and thinking, not sitting and meditating, not sitting and making your mind go blank – no – just sitting.

As we did with the walking exercise, this recorded segment is not for you to listen to as you practise the exercise, but rather provides instructions for you to set up your practice. And again there is a downloadable sheet of these instructions on the 6 ACT Conversations website, where you will also find a list of references that provide more detailed information about mindfulness practices.

As with the Walking exercise, find a quiet place where you won’t be disturbed. If you don’t have access to such a place, do the best you can with what you have. Ask your family or housemates to respect your time or practise at a time when they’re not around or are asleep.

You can sit on the floor if you wish, or in a chair if that is more comfortable. The important things to remember if you’re using a chair are that you keep your spine upright, legs uncrossed, feet flat on the floor, thighs parallel to the floor and do not rest your back against the back of the chair nor your arms on the armrests. If you’re sitting on the floor it’s fine to cross your legs and in fact if you’re flexible enough you may prefer a lotus or half-lotus position. But again, keep your spine upright.

Throughout the sitting period keep as still as possible. This is probably difficult if you haven’t done anything like this before. Many people notice immediately after they start sitting, especially the first few times, that they develop an itch, or an urge to go to the toilet... or a sudden concern about having left the gas on or the car unlocked. Acknowledge these urges and continue sitting. Unless you are the kind of person who leaves the gas on. If so, check it and re-start your sitting session, but make a note that in future you’ll check this before your practice.

As you sit, your posture may gradually slouch. If you notice this, gently realign your spine until it is upright once more. As much as possible, relax any muscles that aren’t involved in keeping your posture upright and your body still. And that’s all there is to it. Now, just sit.

Aim to practise Just Sitting every day. Start with a small commitment – even as small as five minutes a day is a worthwhile start. As we’ve stressed so often before, small efforts consistently made will reward you. If you miss a day, don’t punish yourself, but forgive yourself your slip and re-commit to practise again tomorrow. If the only time you get a chance to practise is on a noisy bus or train ride on the way home, that is still better than skipping practice completely. After all, you’re going to be sitting there, so why not just sit there?